

The Importance of Developing a Web of Discipleship

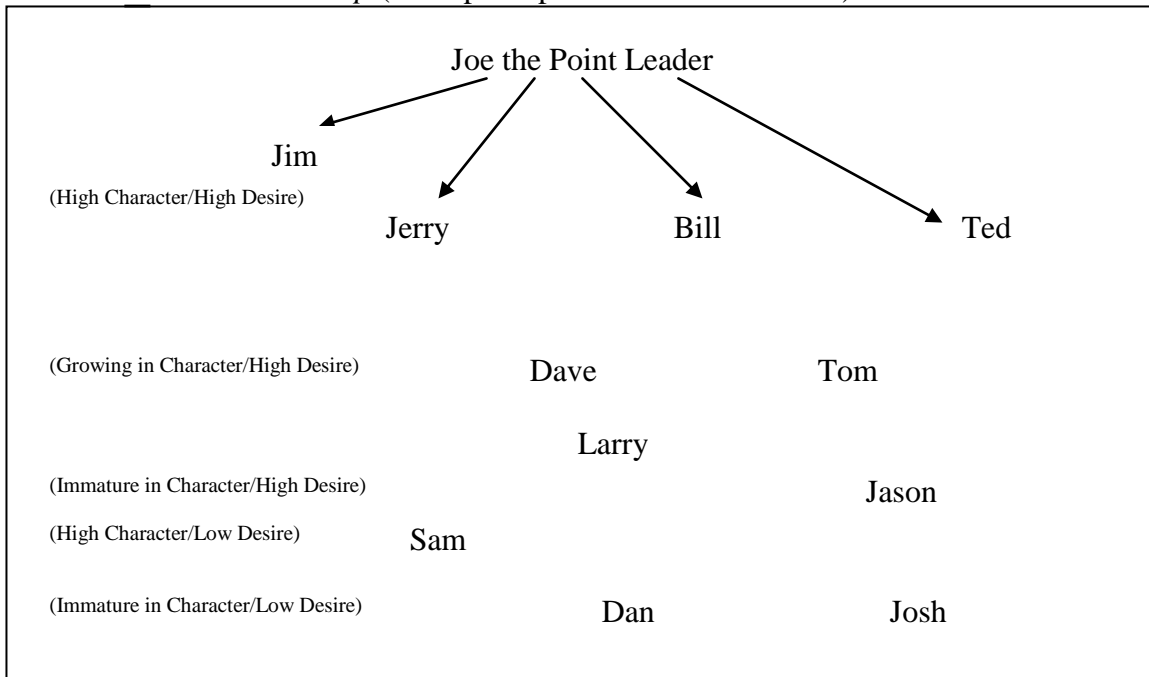
Removing the Leadership Bottleneck

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The Typical (Bottleneck) Method of Group Leadership

Men within one LIFE Group (same principles are true for women)



Explanation of the Model

The arrows represent a personal discipleship relationship between two people.

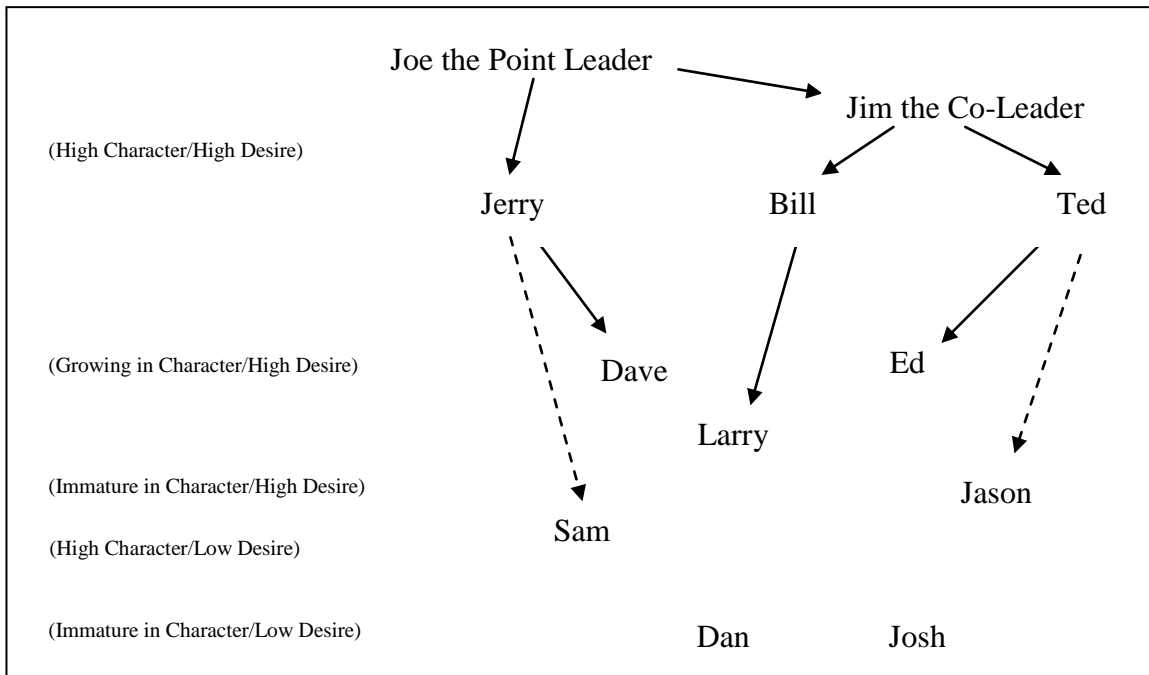
In this model of leadership, the only person doing any leading is Joe, the point leader. Joe is working hard to pull off weekly meetings, and is even trying to go over and above by spending time training 4 guys who have shown themselves to consistently align their lives with Christ and His mission. These men get time from Joe, but there is only so much he can give them due to his many responsibilities leading the LIFE group's multiple functions. Joe is unable to train them to teach others also. Eventually these 4 men become frustrated, and start to drift backwards or look elsewhere for meaningful involvement.

Also, notice that there are 4 other men with a high desire for growth and help. However, because of the leadership bottleneck, nobody is able to "strike while the iron is hot." These 4 men settle in to what they perceive to be the Christian life, and don't progress.

This method of leadership creates a bottleneck as big as Joe's personal capacity. **Because Joe can handle a lot, things go well for a season.** However, eventually growth within the LIFE Group stagnates as people settle into their roles within this community.

The Web of Discipleship Method of Group Leadership

Men within one LIFE Group (same principles are true for women)



Explanation of the Model

In this model, personal discipleship effectively doubles. Joe has made several decisions to make this possible:

1. ***He chose to share LIFE Group leadership with Jim.*** Thus, his time with Jim focuses not only upon personal growth issues, but it also focuses upon overall group leadership and helping Jim to better invest in other guys (Bill & Ted). This decision cleared up time for Joe to more effectively lead the group's direction.
2. ***He chose to give more time to less people.*** By doing this, he had to weigh short-term risks (Bill & Ted not getting much of his time) with long-term multiplication opportunities. This decision enabled him to not only care for Jim and Jerry, but also allowed him to pursue an equipping relationship with them.
3. ***He chose to make equipping (not merely sharing) his priority.*** Although Joe always strives to open his life to the guys he spends time with, he did make a conscious decision to keep their time focused upon equipping. In other words, Joe gives most of his time to helping Jim and Jerry better multiply their lives with the men they are investing in. As a result, Joe's ministry is (indirectly) doubled as these other men teach and train others.

There are several other features of this model that require explanation:

1. ***The seeds of LIFE Group planting are in place.*** As the current group develops, Jim will also develop in his understanding of point leadership. In addition, Jim will also have 2 quality future co-leaders (Bill & Ted) to partner with to plant a new LIFE Group. It would also make sense for Ed, Larry, and Jason to be a part of the new plant since they are relationally tied in with Bill & Ted. Joe is also developing a future co-leader during this process (Jerry). Likewise, it would make sense for Dave and Sam to stick with Joe's group once the new group plants. This strategy allows for maximum relational cohesiveness during the planting process.
2. ***Growth in character and desire to engage in Christ's mission become the 2 primary measures of growth.*** Those wanting to invest in others attempt to make crucial decisions about who to train based upon these 2 measures rather than basing this decision merely upon popularity and personal affinity.
3. ***Of the 2 growth measures, desire to engage in Christ's mission is (perhaps) a better indicator of the hunger level of an individual.*** In other words, it is typically more difficult to get someone with high character (doesn't do many bad things) but low desire (doesn't want to engage in eternal things) to move forward with God. However, a person with low character (still engaged in worldly activity) but high desire (really wants to change and engage in eternal things) can typically make great strides with the help of another person.
4. ***The dashed lines indicate that time with certain people needs to be provisional.*** I suggest that sporadic time be given to most people. These sporadic times together help us to better know the heart and life of an individual. As we see people progress in character and desire, then a more permanent investment should be made.

Closing clarification

Please remember that these models are merely models. Real life tends to be more complicated. However, I do think that the **principles** illustrated here can help guide us to become more effective in multiplying laborers for the harvest.